DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 819 UD 018 504

AUTHOR Johnson, David H.; Smith, Ruthena
TITLE Teaching Ethnicity with Novels.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 11p.; Not available in hard copy due to reproduction quality of the original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. BC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Course Content; *Course Descriptions; Course Objectives; Cross Cultural Studies; *Cross Cultural Training; *Cultural Awareness; *Ethnic Studies; Higher Education; *Novels; Role Playing; Social Work; *Social Workers
IDENTIFIERS *Multicultural Education

ABSTRACT

Knowledge about the social behavior and backgrounds of American ethnic groups is important for social service personnel, but members of the groups are not always available to teach or interact with students. As a way around this problem, a system has been developed for studying ethnic communities through novels featuring members of the chosen ethnic groups and either written or approved by them. Utilizing this approach, a course was designed to prepare social service workers for work among ethnic groups. In the course novels are used in conjunction with materials on the study of cultural orientations, in particular, "An Introduction to Intercultural Communication," by John Condon and Fathi Yousef. Classroom procedures, examples of the novels chosen, and kinds of analyses the students are asked for are presented in this paper. The role-playing of chosen incidents from the novels is stressed. The use of these incidents as a basis for practicing social work skills in the classroom is described. (Author/HC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
David M. Johnson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED156819

TEACHING ETHNICITY WITH NOVELS

by

David M. Johnson
and
Ruthena Smith

Department of Sociology/Social Service
N C A & T State University
Greensboro, N C 27411

1. Introduction

We are developing a procedure for using novels as a main component in teaching our social service majors about the world views of other ethnic groups and providing them with practice in thinking about how to provide service delivery to members of those groups.

Our own education has been in anthropology (David Johnson) and social service and nursing (Ruthena Smith) and we are teaching a course in which we are raising and discussing a broad range of issues that our students need to think about and be clear on themselves before they can be effective social service workers. Our department houses a major undergraduate program in social service, one of the few in a predominantly black university that has been fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

One major area that the department considers important, and which we are working on in the course, is that of the social behavior and life-styles of American ethnic groups. We think that this is important both for personal awareness on the parts of the students and also as a way for social service workers to become aware of and learn how to deal with the many ethnic groups prominent in American life today, especially groups

UD018504

JUL 26 1978

TEACHING ETHNICITY WITH NOVELS

BY

DAVID M. JOHNSON AND RUTHENA SMITH

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY/SOCIAL SERVICE
NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Knowledge about the social behavior and backgrounds of American ethnic groups are important for social service personnel but members of the groups are not always avaliable to give presentations to, or interact with, members of the class. We have been developing a system for providing the "ethnic community" by studying novels featuring members of the chosen ethnic groups and either written or approved by them. We use a carefully selected number of novels in conjunction with material on the study of cultural orientations (we use John Condon and Fathi Yousef, An Introduction to Intercultural Communication (Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), and we have small groups of students report on each novel by analyzing the plot and value orientations of the actors and then do role playing of a chosen 'critical incident' from the novel. Once the group sets up the incident, other class members practice their social work intervention skills, with the class and instructors watching carefully to give advice on the performance. This paper describes the classroom procedures we use and give examples of novels chosen and the kinds of analyses the students are asked for.

that are not part of the traditional black/white dichotomy that the students are familiar with.

2. Goals of the course

We are trying to do three things simultaneously in the approximately two-thirds of the course that we devote to studying ethnic groups:

(1) We want to give information about the history and lifestyles of other ethnic groups and the sources that can be turned to for research on them,

(2) We want to provide the students with a framework for understanding and analyzing the lifestyles of other groups so that they can become familiar with groups beyond the two that we have time for during the semester, and

(3) We want to have students think about how to practice social work intervention with these groups but under non-threatening conditions.

One possible way to achieve our goals would be to do some variation on the classic anthropological approach of doing field work in an ethnic community by living in it or at least spending as much time as possible in it and using a variety of field research techniques to get the information and understandings that are important. This approach is not suitable for us for several reasons. One is that it takes time for a student to get situated in the field, and it takes even more time to do the actual work. It is also hard to be devoted to the field and keep up with university classes. Even when in the field, the student might not be able to practice social work skills or might risk offending the people if this intervention was not done carefully, especially if there has been no opportunity to practice them. Another important reason is that to our knowledge there are no communities in our area composed of members of some ethnic groups which are important when the United States is considered as a whole. Spanish speaking people are an example here.

Our approach gets around these difficulties by using novels as the mechanism to provide the "ethnic community" for study and discussion. For each group chosen for study, we use several novels featuring members of the group, and either written by them or considered acc@Ptable by members that we contact. We use only novels that are set in the present or not too distant past, since we want believable contemporaneous situations. By using novels we provide an introduction to the group and also exciting reading--more exciting than many ethnographies. The novels give insights into the peoples' lives through their own viewpoints and not filtered through outsiders. The novels give ideas about daily life and everyday interactions, something that is not often in ethnographies, and can be studied and re-studied, something that cannot be done with everyday life without special recording instruments. (By now it should be obvious that we are <u>not</u> interested in any kind of strictly literary analysis, but rather are using novels as platforms for getting insights into thinking and behavior patterns and value orientations!)

3. Procedure

We divide the class up into groups of about five students each, and each team chooses one novel and is given a two and one-half hour class period to give a presentation on the novel and then set-up role-playing situations for other students to work with. We have two of these "cycles" each semester, with one ethnic group featured per cycle and each cycle taking about a third of the semester. When possible, as an introduction to the cycle, we arrange for members of the ethnic group to come speak to the class and give us information about themselves and their history, their lifestyles, and their political concerns as members of a minority subculture. We also give out bibliographies of books and articles giving information on the groups bibliographies of books and articles giving

information on the groups and which can be used for research material for class reports. The group that we have consistantly featured has been Native Americans, since there are many of them in our state (North Carolina) and an active Native American organization in Greensboro. We have also been able to take class field trips to Native American centers; one semester we went to Cherokee, North Carolina, and this spring we have gone to Pembroke and Lumberton to the Lumbee Indian area.

The class reports are centered around two main things. One is a discussion of some of the major value orientations of the characters in the novel and the comparison and contrast with general American values, and the other is the presentation of a critical incident from the novel and then setting up the incident so other students can practice social work intervention with the characters from the novel.

We chose the book An Introduction to Intercultural Communication by John Condon and Fathi Yousef (Bobbs-Merrill, 1975) as the basis for this part of the course since we decided that intercultural communication is what we are interested in achieving in this part of the course, and also because the book is built around a scheme of value orientation and is designed to help the reader think about his and others' value orientations and the possible ranges in them. For social workers, we think this is a valuable approach since every social worker needs to be clear about her/his own values and needs to be able to deal with other peoples'values.

For an example of an analysis, we will treat some material from Hal Borland's When the Legends Die. The chief protagonist, Thomas Black Bull, grew up learning the aboriginal Indian ways of life and becomes so much a part of nature that he becomes "Bear Brother" to a bear cub. He is then almost literally torn away from this life and forced to go to an Anglo-run school.

This treatment gives him a passionate hatred of this lifestyle, something which he expresses through his consistent killing of horses while he works as a "bronc buster" rodeo rider--he rides the horses beyond the point of reason and until death for many of them. Only toward the end of the book, after he is almost killed while riding, does he return to the hills where he lived when yound and search again for the bear and do several other things, including bathing in an icy cold stream. These behaviors, which would seem deranged or masochistic to an Anglo, become understanable as a manifestation of the vision quest pursued by many Native American tribes' males as a way to search for a vision or sign of what they should do with their life or become. By this return to the hills, Black Bull is trying to get in touch with his past and search for a purpose to his life, and reestablish his links with nature, which he was forced away from by his association with Anglos. Note that when I describe his activity in English, as for instance by saying that he was "part of nature" I am forced to imply that he was separated from it, an implication that is not what one gets from reading the book. Many Anglos do hiking and camping and urge the preserving of nature, but their orientation is that of getting <u>back to</u> nature and getting <u>away from</u> human activity, since the two are considered separate and human activity disrupts nature. For Black Bull, the two are not separate, but rather being human is at the same time being responsive to and part of nature. In other words, the novel implicitly highlights differences in values between Anglo and Native American cultures in respect to this dimension as well as others.

Once the group has given the background on the novel and its plot, they then choose a critical incident and use that as the basis for role-playing the parts of the principal actors, after which they set up the incident--with themselves still playing the parts of the characters--and have class members serve as social workers who are asked to intervene in this situation. When

possible, these role-playing incidents are videotaped and played back for discussion and comment. Even when the videotape equipment is not available, the use of the incident allows for exploration of approaches to social work intervention in this situation and for students to explore their own feelings and reactions to the participants.

The students very much enjoy this method of presentation of the material, and can really 'get into' the situations in their presentations, while others who serve 'social workers' often let themselves and their values 'hang out' while doing this practice!

In all the novels we have used so far, there have been no lack of incidents worthy of being "critical"--ranging from rape, murder and suicide to less deadly forms of abuse. Also, since the novels do not have social workers as characters in them, the students need to think about what kinds of situations would call for social work intervention or would have a social worker called for in 'real life.' The groups that have presented so far have been very adept at choosing the most crucial situations. In When the Legends Die, students have chosen as critical incidents the time Black Bull was hospitalized after a horse fell on him as well as the time when he was forcibly sent to the Anglo school.

4. Evaluation

We think that this method we have described is an effective way to teach our students about other groups. Using novels has the advantage of holding the students' attention more than do textbooks and ethnographies, and also presents the information in ways that emphasize the viewpoints of the participants, which most "straignt reporting" formats do not do. The novels also give some feeling for the daily behavior of the people--manners of speech, body movement, interactions of social roles, emotional expression, etc.--that are often hard to find out about. We are generally not concerned here with absolute accuracy of all

the information presented in the novel, since we are using them more to provide a platform for using a particular kind of analysis and approach and for trying to upset the students' ethnocentrism. We know that no 'real life' situations would be exactly like those in the novels.

On the other hand, we are not sure yet how much carryover there will be from out classroom situations into real social work practice of the students, partly since none of them has yet graduated. In addition, a more immediate deficiency in the novels, which we have tried to counter by our instructions for analyzing them, is that the novels we have worked with so far have little discussion of community functioning or community groups, since they are focused on individuals. Thus a student does not get from the novel a feeling for the support network that might be available to the people in real situations.

In summary, we are working on an approach for teaching social work students about ethnic groups by having them read novels by and about the groups and give in-class reports which stress the role-playing of chosen incidents from the novels. These incidents are then used as a basis for practicing social work skills in the classroom.

NORTH CAROLINA A & T STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Sociology/Social Service
SS306* Social Functioning
Format for presenting
Presentation and analysis of 'critical incident' from novel
Steps to be taken with presentation by the group doing the presentation.

a. Present to the class a succinct summary of the highlights of the plot, so as to put the incident into context (maximum of 5 minutes)

b. Choose a 'critical incident' from the novel (critical incidents include: institutionalization, deinstitutionalization, poverty, disability, terminal illness, death of a family member, aging, child abuse) and (1) analyze the value orientations of the principal actors using the Condon and Yousef scheme and (2) discuss the actors' perceptions of the incident and how the actors reacted to it, putting their behaviors in social/cultural/historical/life cycle/institutional context. (Social and cultural framework comes from your experience with anthropology and sociology; historical context comes from literature search; life cycle context comes from discussion of Sheehy's Passages, and institutional context comes from consideration of chart of basic institutions. (max. 30 min.)

c. Role-play the chosen critical incident in class.

d. Set up the situation and let other class members to role-play this situation with them acting as social work intervention personnel so they can practice social work skills. At least some of these role-playing presentations will be videotaped for later discussion and analysis.

Due at the end of the cycle is a paper from each class member in which she/he takes some aspect of the novel (as another critical incident) and does a similar analysis of it. This analysis must discuss the indicent in terms similar to "b" above and also must include a discussion of community organization and resources which you expect would be available to the actors (since this sort of thing is not discussed in most novels) and must have at least 10 references from the literature, both social work and social science, and must be typewritten.

Textbook: Condon, John C. and Fathi Yousef. An Introduction to Intercultural Communication. Bobbs-Merrill. 1975.

Selected Novels:

Borland, Hal. 1963. When the Legends Die.
Hale, Janet. 1974. The Owl's Song.
Means, Florence. 1969. Our Cup Is Broken.

Chicanos

Anaya, Rudolfo. 1972. Bless Me, Ultima.
Basquez, Richard. 1970. Chicano.

NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology/Social Service
SS306 * Social Functioning * Spring 1978

Cycle 2: Far Eastern Americans

This cycle will not be based on novels, since we cannot locate suitable ones. Instead, groups will report on research projects (with suggested topics given below) and then set up and role play a "typical" situation in which they have created the characters and written the script. A formal research paper on the project will be due also.
The 'Bibliography on Far Eastern Americans' will provide references with which to begin the research for the projects.

Some suggested topics for reports include the following:
(Note 1: It will probably be necessary to handle different ethnic groups separately, that is, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc. separately and not lumped together.
(Note 2: The general interest for the report will be in the social functions and functioning of institutions both in their original contexts and how they are being altered in form/function in new contexts in the US.

1. ____the family; what is the form and function of the family and what changes are occurring in it? What responses? Why?

2. ____the church, including both Christian and indigeneous, possibly Rev Moon's Unification Church, Zen movement, etc. How are churches serving to assimilate to American culture or protect from assimilation?

3. ____business enterprises; how do they serve in relation to the individual, community, etc?

4. ____schools, including ethnic schools, bilingual schools, 'Saturday schools'. What forms and functions do/did they serve, and why?

5. ____other topics are possible if cleared with the instructors.

Format for reports.
In-class oral reports are to be summaries of the highlights of the written reports, and are to be followed by the role-playing mentioned above.
The written reports are to be done as follows:
1. Introduction and statement of interest (1 page)
2. Description of ethnographic information about the institution in both its original and new contexts (minimum 4 pages)
3. Implications and applications of the above information, and relevant new information, for social service delivery, including information on the kinds of clients typically seen by agencies and their major needs for assistance. (min. 4 pgs.)
4. Discussion of the role-playing format and justification for choosing and doing role-playing in the way chosen, with references to the literature and earlier discussion. (min. 4 pages)
5. Bibliography, minimum 10 entries.

Full research paper, with bibliography and properly typed, due 26 April; in-class reports to be 12 and 19 April.